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ABSTRACT

Some ways are discussed in which impositions (potentially face-threatening linguistic actions such as offers, requests, or complaints) are jointly negotiated by native (NS) and non-native speakers (NNS) in the process of interaction. Attention is focused on connected discourse features that are as much a part of the linguistic action negotiation as any utterance where a particular speech act is produced. The review addresses problems associated with looking at a single speech act as realizing (face-threatening) linguistic action. Following a discussion of those problems is a description of ways that negotiation is manifested in NS-NNS discourse. Examples are drawn from original research consisting of simulated task-oriented conversations between an English NS and a Bruneian second language speaker. Topics covered include speech acts in connected discourse, joint production of speech acts, strategies of politeness, indeterminacy and strategic ambiguity, interactional management of impositions, manipulation of interaction structure, types of responses, and negotiation at the global level. It is concluded that in order to fully understand the negotiation of impositions, different levels of conversational organization must be examined and the levels above the single speech act must be made an integral part of the analysis. In addition, the contributions of both NSs and NNSs should be considered. (LB)

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THE HANDLING OF IMPOSITIONS IN NATIVE - NON-NATIVE CONVERSATIONS

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Introduction

There appears to be wide agreement among those concerned with pragmatics and the study of discourse that interaction is to be seen as a process of negotiation where participants actively and continuously collaborate to bring about satisfactory outcomes. The view of discourse as a static product has largely been rejected and, instead, interaction is seen as a dynamic process and the interactants' joint achievement, or to put it in Candlin's (1987:24) terms, as "the skilled accomplishment of participants in the service of some goal".

In the light of recent developments in conversation and discourse analysis, it seems somewhat surprising that one discourse phenomenon, that of the production and management of *impositions*, or potentially face-threatening linguistic actions such as offers, requests or complaints, has largely been seen from the perspective of the single speech act as produced by one participant in interaction. Another term, which is often used of such action, namely *face-threatening act* (Brown & Levinson 1987), makes explicit the undue emphasis put on a single speech act in studies concerned with the phenomenon. Activities of this type have been studied extensively from cross-cultural and interlanguage perspectives and research on patterns in speech act production is now abundant (see eg Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper 1990). However, only recently has it been acknowledged that the study of single unilaterally produced speech acts is not enough, and that we must examine the broader discourse context in order to find out how actions of this type are actually negotiated in interaction.

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The emphasis on speech act production in research has probably, at least partly, been due to the apparent[1] speech-act-centredness of the most influential model concerned with the study of face-threatening behaviour, ie. the politeness model by Brown and Levinson (1987). Their theory of politeness makes bold claims about the central nature of politeness in interpersonal communication and about universal principles guiding polite or face-supportive strategic behaviour, and has inspired a whole host of studies on the linguistic realisations of politeness phenomena and their cross-cultural variation, usually as manifested in speech act production. In the non-native and interlanguage context the focus of research has been on the errors or irregularities in the learners' speech act behaviour and relatively little attention has been paid to native - non-native cooperation in the management of actions in connected discourse.

Although such studies give valuable insights into the regularities and variation in the way in which speech acts are produced, they necessarily present a severely limited view of the way in which linguistic action, in this case of the face-threatening type, unfolds in discourse. The purpose of this paper is to examine some of the ways in which impositions are jointly negotiated by native and non-native speakers in the process of interaction, and focus attention on some of the features of connected discourse which are as much a part of the negotiation of linguistic action as any utterance where a particular speech act is produced.

In the first part of the paper I will briefly review some of the problems associated with looking at a single speech act as realising (face-threatening) linguistic action. In the second part I hope to draw attention to some of the ways in which such actions, ie. impositions, are actually negotiated in sequences of discourse. I will illustrate the way in which negotiation is manifested in native - non-native discourse with examples taken from the data I am using in my own research. The data consists of simulated task-oriented conversations between a native speaker of English and a Bruneian second language speaker. I use the term 'task-oriented' to refer to interactionally complex situations which

[1] The need to study longer stretches of discourse is acknowledged by Brown & Levinson (1987:38-43) but the description and analysis is largely at the level of single utterances. A broader view of politeness is presented in Scollon & Scollon 1981.

involve solving some problem such as conveying and responding to an invitation, request or offer, making a complaint, etc.

Problems with the speech act approach

Many of the problems with the focus on single speech acts arise from the intricate and diverse nature of face-to-face communication and the inadequacy of a non-empirical approach such as Speech Act theory in the task of describing its richness and variety. The problems discussed below represent just a few of the shortcomings of speech act theory that have been observed by researchers (cf. Hancher 1979, Levinson 1983, Leech 1983, Verschueren 1987).

Speech acts in connected discourse

Several linguists have noted that speech acts are generally not produced in isolation but in sequences in dialogues or conversations where they are constrained by what has been accomplished in previous speech acts. In natural discourse the functions or illocutionary forces of utterances cannot thus be identified on a basis of an a priori classification of possible functions into discrete categories (cf. Searle 1976), but they depend on the place of the utterance in the sequence of talk and on the communicative situation in progress. Furthermore, a single utterance may reflect multiple functions or illocutionary forces, or, conversely, one function or illocutionary force may extend over a series of utterances.

Van Dijk (1981) talks about *pragmatic macrostructures* or *global speech acts* which have a function of organizing individual speech acts in a coherent conversation. Thus for instance a whole sequence of different individual speech acts might be characterised by the illocutionary force of *requesting* and be called a *macro-request*, and this pragmatic macro-act could account for local pragmatic coherence by defining the pragmatic topic of conversation.

Similar ideas have been suggested by other researchers (eg. Schneider 1988, Faerch & Kasper 1989, Cohen & Olshtain 1990, Kärkkäinen 1990) who have noted for instance that in making an imposition speakers usually produce a

speech act set, where the imposition is sometimes taken up and expressed several times in slightly different terms and regularly prepared and supported in discourse in different ways. The sequence where the topic of the imposition (eg. a request) is expressed is frequently preceded by *pre-sequences*, and the response to the imposition by *pre-responding sequences*. Thus the management of the interactional problem which might have been expressed in a single utterance, as expected in speech act theory, actually takes up a considerable amount of time and effort and affects the organization of the entire interaction.

Joint production of speech acts

The notion of macro-speech act also extends to the essentially reciprocal and cooperative nature of conversations in that many speech acts are produced jointly by both participants. Instead of carefully formulating a series of utterances to perform some desired speech act, speakers often 'put out feelers' and approach the topic indirectly in constant interaction with each other, and in this way the desired speech act in a sense emerges in the interactive process rather than is unilaterally produced by one speaker.

Interestingly, in the Oulu University discourse analysis project it was found that students of English for some reason did not utilize these interactive possibilities in their handling of face-threatening acts, but tended to produce speech acts as mini-monologues as opposed to the native speakers' dialogue patterns (Kärkkäinen 1990). A similar trend may account for a feature of non-native usage observed in the cross-cultural speech act project, namely that non-natives tend to produce much longer utterances than native speakers (Blum-Kulka 1989:26). It is yet to be established whether this in fact is a recurring feature of non-native discourse. Preliminary observations of my own native - non-native data do not in fact support this hypothesis.

Speech act and strategies of politeness

Politeness theory introduces the notion of strategy as a means of achieving communicative goals without endangering mutual relations in discourse. Different strategies are used to soften the impact of potential impositions (or

potentially face-threatening actions) in order to preserve and protect the participants' 'face'. The relationship between a strategy and a speech act, however, is somewhat problematic. It is sometimes assumed that a strategy is synonymous with the linguistic means used to mitigate some particular face-threatening act. This is not the case: there is no one-to-one relationship between any particular face strategy and a particular linguistic manifestation at the level of an utterance. For instance, Scollon & Scollon (1981:171) note that strategies of politeness operate at a global level reflecting the speakers' orientation to each other, as expressing solidarity or involvement on the one hand, or deference on the other. Moreover, they point out that a single communicative act may incorporate multiple face strategies.

Scollon & Scollon (1981:175 ff.) extend the global functions of politeness further and introduce the idea of cross-culturally different *politeness systems*. They claim that some cultures reflect a system of *deference politeness* which is based on the assumption of high values of social distance, and others an opposite system of *solidarity politeness* where interpersonal closeness and common ground are valued. Such differences in politeness systems are expected to explain difficulties and misunderstandings in cross-cultural communication.

Indeterminacy and strategic ambiguity

Several linguists have discussed the indirectness and ambivalence of much of communication and noted that speakers often intentionally leave the force of their utterances unclear and thus leave it up to the hearer to decide how they want to interpret them. Leech (1983:23) captures the indeterminacy of communication in his description of an utterance as a "linguistic juggling act, in which the performer has to simultaneously keep several balls in the air".

This phenomenon is part of the negotiability of meaning and is especially common in situations involving some face-threat. In such discourse we often find sequences where one participant is deliberately vague for instance for reasons of politeness and the other is trying to reduce the ambivalence and arrive at some interpretation by negotiation. Jenny Thomas (1985:773) calls this a process of *pragmatic disambiguation*, and sees it as a feature of most conversations. Through processes of this type participants negotiate various

pragmatic parameters such as power, distance and the seriousness of the imposition, and deal with the socio-cultural dimensions of discourse. The process also reflects the cumulative character of pragmatic force, as participants interpret utterances in the light of what has gone before (Thomas 1985:780).

Interactional management of impositions

I will now turn to the way impositions are handled in their conversational context in some instances of native (NS) - non-native (NNS) discourse. Below I shall make some observations about ways in which native and non-native participants make use of different interactional possibilities in their management of a potentially face-threatening situation and illustrate the observations with examples extracted from my data (see the appendix).

Manipulation of interaction structure

Recent studies which have begun to focus attention on face-threatening action in a sequential context have discovered that the interactional structure of conversations is often manipulated for purposes of politeness. It has been established (see eg. Pomerantz 1984, Faerch and Kasper 1990) that impositions are often systematically preceded by preparatory utterances or whole exchanges, sometimes termed *pre-sequences* (or pre-exchanges in discourse analysts' terms), and followed by *post-sequences* which serve to repair possible face-damage caused by the imposition. This type of manipulation of interaction structure is one characteristic feature in the negotiation of impositions, and it appears to be strategic in the sense that it is motivated by the speaker's wish to achieve a certain outcome and at the same time pay attention to face considerations.

Also certain types of interactional moves have been found to have a strategic face-supporting function in conversations. These are moves which expand and support some imposition (eg. a *request*) by for instance giving reasons or grounds for it, or disarming the hearer in anticipation of a possible offense (Edmondson 1981:122).

Example 1 (see the appendix) illustrates the way in which these interactional possibilities are made use of by the NNS performing the imposition of *inviting/requesting*[2]. The situation here is the following: the NS and the NNS are both students, the NS is visiting Brunei on holiday because his parents are working there. He is sitting in a coffee bar and is approached by the NNS, who wants to invite him to a party he is arranging because he has heard that the NS plays the guitar and has been playing in other parties recently.

In this example we can see how the NNS approaches the topic gradually and prepares ground for the imposition. First of all he asks the NS questions to establish common ground: *Are you Robert Dunston* (line 9) and *are you visiting*? (lines 21-22). Then he pays a disarming compliment to the NS by saying *I heard from my parents that you are good at singing and playing the guitar* (lines 32-34), and introduces himself and the topic of the party in general terms: *we have made the arrangement to have the informal party*, and hints at the invitation: *we don't have a person that can play guitar and sing* (lines 46-49). At this point in the conversation the NS has already deduced that an invitation is coming because he starts asking questions about the time and place of the party even though no explicit invitation has been made. In fact, the NNS performs the invitation still very indirectly in the following turn by saying: *Are you... do you have time?*

It seems that in this example the non-native speaker uses his knowledge of conversational organization and the possibilities of preparing an imposition indirectly before performing it 'on the record', and uses this knowledge as a means of making the imposition less abrupt and face-threatening to the recipient. The native speaker, on the other hand, makes use of similar assumptions of conversational organization and recognizes the NNS's intention before the imposition is actually expressed on the basis of the preparatory utterances.

What follows in this sequence is also of interest because the NS does not immediately respond to the invitation, but more negotiation follows before a

[2] In this case the elicited activity could be described as fulfilling both these functions; it is an invitation with an ulterior motive of asking for a favour (NNS wants NS to play the guitar in his party).

preliminary agreement is reached. And this brings us to another point of interest: preferred responses to impositions.

Types of responses

The types of responses that follow turns where an imposition is expressed present another conversational phenomenon which is relevant to the negotiation of impositions. It has been noted by some conversation analysts (eg. Pomerantz 1984) that some responses are *preferred*, that is, they are easier to produce in the conversational context than other responses, and are in this sense unmarked, while others are *dispreferred* or marked. Thus it is conversationally "easier" to agree than disagree, to accept invitations or offers than to reject them, and to answer questions than to decline to answer them. Preferred responses are often immediate, structurally simple and direct, while dispreferred ones are delayed, structurally elaborated and indirect.

Brown and Levinson (1987:38-9) explain this phenomenon in relation to face concerns. They point out that a dispreferred response amounts to a face-threatening act, eg. refusals of offers or non-answers to questions constitute an imposition in that they imply lack of consideration.

In example 1 again, we notice how the NS avoids or delays a direct response to the invitation, and instead gives possible reasons for rejecting the invitation: *unfortunately that is a night that my parents are having a party themselves* (lines 57-59). In this case the simple delay appears to be enough to imply to the NNS that that NS is perhaps about to reject the invitation. This is seen in the NNS's minimal reactions *I see* (lines 60 and 70). However, in order to save the NNS's face, the NS suggests a compromise and partially agrees to accept the invitation (lines 71-76): *I tell you what, I - I will consider first to do what you're talking about, to go along to the informal party*, etc. Note how the earlier vagueness and indirectness makes it possible for the NS to opt for this kind of action. If he had given a direct response immediately, it would be rather more difficult to continue the negotiation. At this point in the conversation a preliminary agreement is reached, although the speaker still makes his response sufficiently vague to leave his options open, and more negotiation follows where he in fact later changes his mind again.

Also whole sequences can be preferred to others, and equally be motivated by face concerns: an offer-acceptance sequence is preferable to a request-acceptance sequence because it is less risky for S to induce H into offering to do something than to ask him to do it, because H could refuse a request but not withdraw an offer. This makes it possible to indirectly avoid dispreferred sequences and 'fish out' preferred ones and thus negotiate an imposition off the record before (or instead of) making an on-record transaction. (Brown & Levinson 1987:39-40.)

It seems that something like this is going on in Example 2. There we have a situation which was expected to elicit the imposition of *requesting* from the NNS, who wants the NS to return a pair of earrings that she borrowed from her. In this example we can see how the NNS avoids doing the imposition, and the situation proceeds through a stage of off-record negotiation (lines 30 to 70) where the participants hedgingly try to establish whether the NS has in fact borrowed the earrings. Here the NNS also repeatedly flouts Grice's (1975) *cooperative maxims* by not being strictly truthful - in her brief it was clear the NS did borrow the earrings - and by being deliberately vague, and also saying somewhat less than she means. Following Grice we could suggest that she has a special reason for flouting the maxims, and that by doing this she implies a desire not to impose. Finally it is the NS who offers to check if she has got the earrings, without having been asked: *Look I'll check my bag when I get home* (lines 66-67). The NNS's response *Okay okay I just thought... I just want you to look around* (line 68) seems to confirm that this was the reaction she was hoping for, and suggests that she has in fact succeeded in her attempt to avoid the imposition of the request altogether, and fishing out an offer instead.

In Example 3 a similar negotiation occurs. Here the NNS happens to overhear a conversation between the NS and somebody else, where the NS expresses he needs help with a text written in Dusun language, which is a language that the NNS is familiar with. The situation was designed to elicit an *offer* of help from the NNS. As you can see from the extract, however, no offer is made explicitly. The NNS initiates the conversation and admits that she is familiar with the language, but waits for the NS to bring up the imposition. Interestingly, the NS also avoids explicitly requesting for help, but first asks questions (*Do you know about Dusun?* (lines 19-20) and *So do you speak Dusun?* (line 28) in order to establish common ground, and then brings up the imposition in indirect terms in the form of a suggestion for joint action: *Well perhaps we could do two things.*

If I showed you the article perhaps you could tell if it is in Dusun (lines 38-39). A little bit later, the NNS responds to this and in fact offers help: *if you show me the article maybe I could help* (lines 58-61). Simultaneously with the offer the NS repeats his suggestion. Thus the final utterances in this example give a good example of an imposition emerging in interaction as a joint product of two speakers. What is more, the imposition would seem to simultaneously reflect a number of illocutionary forces: that of offering, requesting and suggesting.

The three examples serve to illustrate how impositions are not produced unilaterally in single speech acts but negotiated jointly in the course of the conversation, often in very indirect terms.

Negotiation at global level

Negotiation of impositions is also reflected at an even more global level in the conversation. If we look at the level of the whole encounter, the negotiation is reflected for instance in the timing of the imposition; when and how it is introduced, what precedes and follows it, whether it is repeated or reformulated later, and how the topic is closed in the discourse. One phenomenon of interest in this context is the function of small talk, or 'phatic' phases of conversations, which serve to fulfil the participants' interactional goals in that they are focused on maintaining interpersonal relations rather than achieving any specific transactional outcomes. In my data, problematic impositions are often handled during several phases of the conversation, with interactionally oriented sequences preceding and sometimes also following them. Initial opening and small talk phases prepare ground for the coming imposition and in a sense create a climate of solidarity and cooperation which in part softens the impact of the imposition. Both examples 1 and 2 open with such sequences. In fact, cases where the participants go straight to the point are exceptional.

Sometimes such interactionally oriented phases can also have a corrective function. If something goes wrong in the negotiation of the imposition, the speakers drop the main topic and start talking about something more trivial, as if aiming to re-establish friendly relations before approaching the touchy subject again. In this way the negotiation of one imposition sometimes proceeds through several phases of talk, some of which are oriented primarily towards

the business of dealing with the imposition, and others towards the maintenance of cooperation and reciprocal support of face. Of course, in actual interaction the situation is even more complex than this in that the conversations contain a number of impositions, and the expression of one type of imposition (eg. invitation, request) potentially anticipates another (eg. rejecting an invitation, not complying to a request). Unfortunately space does not allow for examples of whole complex encounters where such lengthy negotiation takes place.

Conclusion

I have only been able to take up a few of the ways in which impositions can be negotiated and cooperatively managed by a native and a non-native participant in connected discourse, and the points I have attempted to make can be summarised as follows. Firstly, in order to get a full picture of the negotiation of impositions we need to look at different levels of conversational organization, and make the levels above the single speech act an integral part of the analysis. Secondly, even in the case of native - non-native discourse, we need to look at the contribution of both participants instead of concentrating on the non-natives' productions and finding fault in them. It seems that the non-natives' conversational contributions have all too often been examined simply from the point of view of possible pragmatic errors or examples of a particular non-native interactional style, without even considering them as motivated and potentially relevant responses to the native speakers' utterances, let alone allowing them any recognition as skilful contributions to the conversation at hand. Perhaps the conversation analytic goal of studying and describing "the competences that ordinary speakers use and rely on in participating in intelligible, socially organized interaction" (Atkinson & Heritage 1984:1), and the perspective of discourse as a skilled accomplishment of the participants should not be restricted to discourse between 'competent' native speakers, it seems that this point of view might have something to offer for research on native - non-native discourse as well.

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APPENDIX

EXAMPLE 1

NNS: Malay male
NS: English (English) male

NNS: Hello
NS: Oh hello there
NNS: Are you * Robert Dunston?
NS: I am. How did you know that?
NNS: Well I ** my parents knows ** knows your - your - your fathers
NS: Ah * so how do your parents know mine * (parents
NNS: He - he) lives next door to * to our - to our * house
NS: ah
NNS: but I - I've seen you before
NS: yea I was going to say I think I have seen you as well
NNS: mm * but I wonder * are you visiting **
NS: yes * I have come yea I live in Australia
NNS: mm
NS: and because my parents work here I have just come over here for * a visit of maybe twelve weeks three months, just to see how life is in Brunei and then * I will be going back to my course * in Australia
NNS: I heard that from * from my parents that you are very good * at singing and playing guitar
NS: Well it's er my fame has gone in front of me er I wouldn't call myself very good but er * they are two things that I do enjoy er I - I like to go running and I like to play the guitar * and singing, singing along to my * guitar
NNS: I see - see I 'm - I'm a student of Management Studies at the * University of Brunei Darussalam
NS: ah yes ?
NNS: so we have made the arrangement to ** have the informal party * but *** but now we don't have so er * a person that can play guitar and * sing * (songs
NS: er) where is this party?
NNS: it's in the University of Brunei
NS: And when would that be?
NNS: It's er, it will be, but I'm not sure, it will be on Tuesday night.
NS: Tuesday night
NNS: Are you, do you have time?
NS: Well, I think, unfortunately, that is a night that my parents are having a party themselves.
NNS: (I see
NS: I think) they're having some kind of swimming party. I mean it's not really my type of thing. As you know I prefer to go running and playing guitar...
NNS: Uh-huh
NS: ... but, er, my parents are pressurising me to some extent that I should stay in the party because I'm going on holiday.
NNS: Yes, I see
NS: I tell you what, I - I will consider, that is, the first to do what you're talking about, to go along to an informal party and mixing with people that I feel more relaxed with because quite honestly my parents' friends can be a little boring.

EXAMPLE 2

NNS: Malay Female
NS: English (Australian) Female

NS: How's things then?
NNS: Oh, not too bad. I haven't had much of a chance to do much studying. I've been out every night this week, what about you?
NS: Well, it's er* it's okay.
NNS: Yes, erm.
NS: Did you go to (inaudible)?
NNS: Br, yes I did, what about you?
NS: Yes, yes it was quite a good show (7 sec.) what have you been doing since Monday?
NNS: Erm. I've been, I've got an essay to do but, but I've finished it alreadyuum, I'm ** finishing it soon (inaudible)
NS: I don't speak Brunei either, I don't even speak Malay.
NNS: Yes, that's the same as Malay (inaudible), but I study in your country.
NS: So (5 sec.)
NNS: Umm* there is one particular thing, er, I would like to ask you about.
NS: Yea?
NNS: Will you? Erm, this is regarding the ear-rings.
NS: (Ear-rings?
NNS: The the) ear-rings that er... (5 sec.)
NS: uh? Which ear-rings?
NNS: The, the ear-rings that er you wore at I think it was during the movie that you* erm* that you borrowed from me.
NS: On Monday night?
NNS: I guess so, I...
NS: I borrowed your ear-rings on (Monday?
NNS: Yes) (inaudible)
NS: Oh.
NNS: Uh?
NS: Have I not returned them to you?
NNS: Well, I don't know but, er, either you borrowed them or er I've misplaced them somewhere.
NS: Ah? Which, which? Which were they?
NNS: Umm* the ones I showed you when I moved in here, umm* from a very close friend of mine in Brunei.
NS: I see. Umm. Oh well I don't remember wearing them, I don't know anything about them actually but perhaps you were showing them to me and then dropped them in the room.
NNS: I don't remember.
NS: Perhaps, perhaps they dropped into my bag.
NNS: (that's possible
NS: Look I'll) check my bag when I get home.
NNS: Okay, okay ** I just thought er * I just want you to er * to look around.
NS: Oh well, I'll look in my bag.

EXAMPLE 3

NNS: Malay Female
NS: English (Scottish) Male

NNS: Hello
NS: Oh, hi.
NNS: Well, I'm new around here but I couldn't help * hearing your conversation, er, something to do with, er, Dusun? Is that right? Am I right?
NS: Well, yes, I mean, er, something to do with Dusun, yes, erm it's an article we've got that er * we think may be written in Dusun.
NNS: I see
H. But, er, I * I, do you know about Dusun? It's, it's, er, one of the languages of er * of Brunei. Brunei is a small country in erm...
NNS: Yea, actually I come from Brunei
NS: Oh, sorry, ah, very (sorry
NNS: Yea) that's why I couldn't help, er, listening to you, to your conversation just now.
NS: So, do you speak Dusun?
NNS: Well, not exactly, not exactly, but I have a lot of friends, er, Dusun friends and I'm used to hearing them, you know, speaking in, well, I sometimes heard them speaking with er, because I, I, know a little bit about that language...
NS: Oh, well.
NNS: ... not language, but
NS: Well, perhaps we could do two things. If I showed you the article you could ** tell me if it is in Dusun...
NNS: Ah, sure.
NS: ... and then perhaps you could er * you could translate it. What language do you speak?
NNS: Well, I speak Malay.
NS: And
NNS: And I converse in English as (you
NS: Yes, of course) (inaudible overlapping speech) Yes, of course, I mean, er, is Dusun similar to Malay?
NNS: Not exactly, but I think, er, there are similar, well I can say, not exactly words but there are some, you know, connection somehow, erm, for example, well, I can't think of one at the moment, (laugh) but...
NS: Ah.
NNS: ... but if you, if you, well if you show me the article?
NS: (Well, look...
NNS: Maybe I could help?)
NS: ... I'll bring the article to you and we could perhaps go through it together. I have a little bit of Malay that I picked up in Sarawak (...)